E. M. Robinson

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THE HUSTLING EAST

A YEAR'S ACTIVITIES AT FENCHOW, CHINA

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A QUARTERLY

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Foreword.

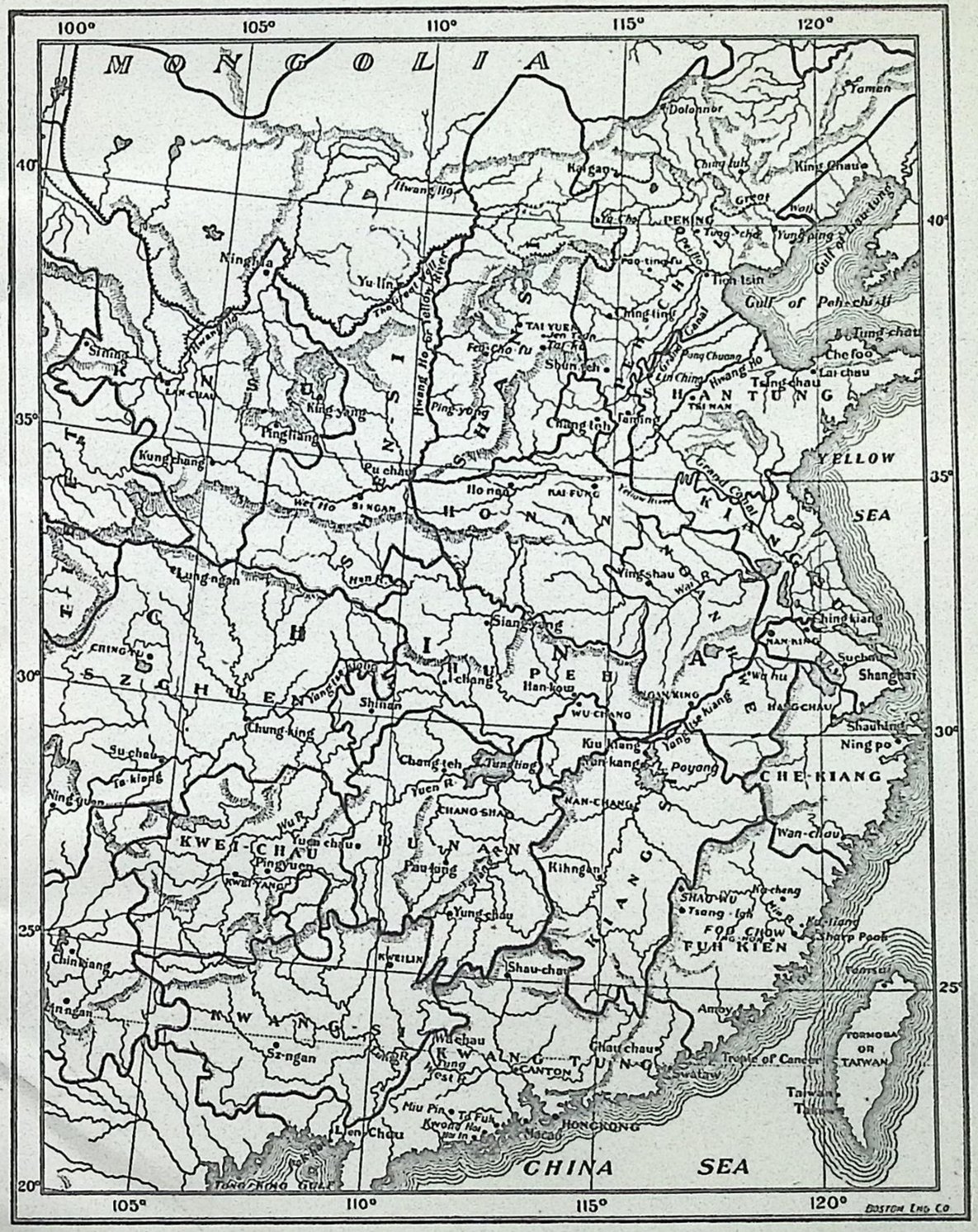
To most Americans the words "mission station" have a sobering and formal sound; the "annual report" of such a station would be regarded as juiceless a production as could be met in the world of print.

This number of the Envelope Series is made up of sample parts of the Report of the Fenchow station in China for 1913-14. At this station a half dozen young missionaries have been carrying on a dozen distinct lines of missionary enterprise; while some of these lines are unique, on the whole they are typical of what is being done throughout China and all the East.

From reading these abridged accounts of several undertakings as those having them in charge have written of them, it is believed a clearer idea may be gotten of the variety, the practicality and the effectiveness of that round of labor which we call missionary work.

Fenchow (or Fenchowfu as it used to be called) is located in the province of Shansi and will be found near the centre at the top of the map.

W. E. S.



The Hustling East

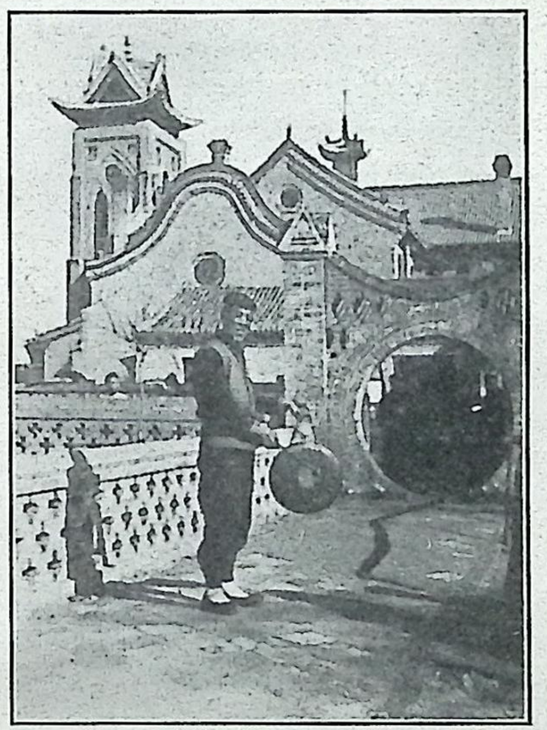
As Seen at Fenchow, China, in 1914.

The ferment in the minds of men which led to China's great political revolution of the past few years has not yet spent itself, but spreading now to the common people is gradually gathering force for a great new, moral upheaval.

In our own field there are distinctly evident the beginnings of this movement. The past year has seen a body of nearly two hundred leading men of the district band themselves together in a regular weekly service for the study of the Bible. It has seen the highest official of the district address a crowded house in the new church; it has seen the beginning of public charity in the founding of an institution for the care of the poor; it has seen a woman sue her husband in the magistrate's Yamen on the ground that he did not provide for the home because of opium, and obtain justice; it has seen a body of the leading men of the district approach the Church with the proposition that it take over the management of the higher educational work in the Government Middle School; it has seen government recognition awarded to the church schools of the field; and it has seen the largest ingathering of new converts of any year in the Church's history.

The renovating force of the Christian Church in the

district as we see it working from day to day is one of incalculable momentum. Formerly it was a feeble exotic and Chinese who joined it were often despised as weakly giving themselves to the service of the foreigner. But a change has taken place as the church has increasingly worn the aspect of a Chinese institution, led and officered by Chinese, and by Chinese who in many conspicuous instances, immeasurably excel their fellow-countrymen of the old faith and scholarship, both in learning and in character. Strong men are coming to see, too, that Christianity is not something to be feared; that a Christian and a patriot are not irreconcilable in one person; and that a new meaning, a new content must be put into most, if not all, the institutions of Chinese life. Gradually they are coming to see that Christianity, transcending national ideals and interests, is to be realized not by destroying but by enlarging them.



Calling to Church in lack of a Church bell.

300 in Sunday School.

In the central station some of the main activities only can be mentioned. In the church itself the regular lines of work have been maintained. The new church building is already taxed to its capacity to accommodate the demands made upon it. Mr. Hsieh's meetings brought new spirit to many. Seven preaching places are served from the central church, some of them developing into vigorous centers. Special mention should be made of the work of the Sunday School. The weekly attendance ranges between three and four hundred and is divided into some thirty classes each with its teacher. A weekly training class for teachers is held. The lack of classrooms is a hindrance to the best work. The Sunday School as thus conducted accomplishes two important ends. It reaches effectively a large number of people who would not be reached through the other services of the church and for that reason this arm of the service should be largely extended throughout the city and suburbs. The second end achieved is the training of workers. As one studies the religious situation in the Chinese Church, he cannot escape the conviction that greater emphasis must be placed upon the training of youth and children in actual Bible-teaching service, if we are ever to reach practical efficiency in the use of lay agents, and the Sunday School is pointing the way to this end.

120,000 Pages by Mimeograph.

The literary work of the year is perhaps noteworthy. This has amounted to over 120,000 pages printed on the mimeograph and includes, 1. a monthly pamphlet giving the results of the month's work in Bible Study for the Bible Study Circle among the gentry. 2. A similar booklet bi-monthly on educational subjects for the teachers and schools of the field. 3. A pamphlet for the preachers and other workers in the church. Some of these men are working in places of peculiar hardship, isolation and loneliness, and we try in this way to carry to them aid in their spiritual and intellectual life and growth. 4. An interesting work has been done in scattering popular songs through the city. Street songs in China are vile in the extreme. One worker conceived the idea of suiting words to these same tunes and scattering them throughout the city. The words were not always those of Gospel songs, but clean and helpful in their nature, either written by himself or adapted from other sources. In some instances they have been taken up well, in others no result seems to have come. 5. Many helpful articles in papers or magazines on Christian, social, or health subjects have been copied and scattered through the country field as tracts.

For Men of Learning.

The work for the literati has been carried steadily forward through the year, meeting weekly for study. Since September they have been making a detailed study of the Gospel of Mark. The results of the month's study are

brought together and printed in pamphlet form and sent to all members of the Circle which now includes men from far distances, from whom most appreciative letters are received. The Chinese papers have in many instances given large notice to the work of the Circle, and the mails bring an increasing number of letters from interested persons. Here is an important opportunity to touch deeply the trend of Chinese life and thought.

The Out-stations.

Visits have been made to most of the important churches, but until it is possible to have one man giving his entire time to this work the larger portion of the centers must of necessity in any one year remain unvisited. With the larger use of Chinese supervision, however, this is not so serious as once it would have been. The impression one brings back with him from the touch of the field as a whole is that there is a distinct advance in the feelings of the population towards Christianity. Scores of new acquaintances are formed on every trip, many of them men in prominent position, and all alike cordial and warm-hearted in their appreciation. Of many it may be said they are "not far from the Kingdom." There is not only negatively the absence of real hostility, but positively there is a much more kindly feeling towards the Church, and a greater respect for Christians and the Christian standard of living.

A Wealthy Market Town.

As one example of several places now open to us and asking for help we may take the case of Si Ma Ts'un, a

large market town to the south. And in reading the story of this place it should be kept in mind that this is not an isolated instance, but one which can be reduplicated in almost every respect in a number of places. Si Ma Ts'un is a town noted for the wealth and scholarly attainments of its people, two things which ensure a strong church when once the knowledge of the Gospel has been given them. Outside of a walled city, Si Ma Ts'un has the best schools in this part of the country. It happens the head of these schools is a man whose acquaintance was made during the days of the Revolution. As far back as 1911 requests have been coming for a preacher for the place but we were unable to send one. In 1912 when the church here in the city was dedicated Si Ma Ts'un heard what was being done, and sent one of their number, a Chu Jen, to bring the greetings of the town. Although the program was already crowded, a place was given him at his earnest request and he read a paper expressing the hearty congratulations of the town and its interest in what Christianity was doing in the county, closing with the hope again that they, too, might some day have an opportunity to know what our teachings are.

Several times since then the requests have been repeated, and last fall although we could promise no more, Dr. Watson promised to conduct an opium refuge there for a few months to meet the needs of that class. In February, a delegation came to Fenchow to present a written request, signed by several of the head men of the

town, asking that we do not this time refuse to send them a preacher and promising to do what they could to help in establishing a work which would enable them also to learn about Christianity. Later a visit was paid to the place, the first time any of us had been there. The word soon spread and the people poured in, each with the same request that they might be given a chance to understand the meaning of what they heard was going on in other places, and each with an added reason why we should begin at once. One old man passed seventy years of age said he had been waiting fourteen years for the church to come that he might learn what Christianity really is. It came out that through reading he had in 1900 become convinced of the truth of Christianity but had never had an opportunity to know what its teachings are.

Unless one has been through the experience it would be difficult for him to realize how hard it is to say no to such a band of men and their request, especially when to meet just such needs as this is what he came to China for, and what the church is seeking to do. It is not an opening which we seek against opposition; indeed it is not we who are seeking them but they who are seeking us.

From Buddha to Christ.

A rather interesting incident developed in the class work at Tung Chia Chwang this year. Across the street from the meeting-place of the class was a temple, and in the temple a priest, a young man. His home was originally far to the south near the Ling Shih Pass. He is of

good family, and in comfortable circumstances. He is one of those rare examples of a man who in his native state has grown dissatisfied with his moral attainments. An unrest of conscience from the ever-present consciousness of shortcoming in the presence of an unknown and unseen standard which he instinctively knew to exist, and a longing for holiness, led him at length to take the oath of renunciation of the Buddhist monk, whereby casting away all earthly wealth, and leaving father and mother, never to see them again (a requirement of the oath), he turned to the Ling Shih Mountains and disappeared from public view to tend his wounded heart, and weary and heavy-laden to seek for mental peace and rest.

Failing to find this in the mountain solitudes he wandered from temple to temple, until he finally reached Tung Chia Chwang. One day he noticed a large group of men across the street. The next day they were there again. He wondered who they were and what they were doing. He was told they belonged to the Jesus Church and were "studying the doctrine." Ready to jump at the remotest chance of a hope that he might attain the peace from the sorrows of his heart, which he had thus far sought in vain, he that morning quietly and unobtrusively made his way into the room where the class was at work. Something in the message of the leader that morning at once brought balm to his weary, wounded spirit, and from that moment, and through the month the class studied, the most determined earnest member was this man of the shaven head and queer Buddhist garb. He had found what he was looking for and to it he gave himself, his all.

Finding he had embraced Christianity the Buddhist Brotherhood at once cast him out. His family, of course, would not receive him. So some of the Christians joined together and agreed to help him "get over the days" as the Chinese expression is, until things could be adjusted. He went to the Loa Ch'eng Church, where early and late he pored over his Bible, getting an ever deepening heart satisfaction from his new faith. He is still there faithfully at work.

Honor to Whom Honor is Due.

In making this report we must give honor to whom honor is due, our fellow-laborers in the Chinese Church. At home their names may mean but little, but out here they stand for men and women who have borne the burden and heat of the day, earnest, zealous, efficient, faithful, and successful in the highest sense of the word. They are the ones and not we foreigners who must bear the brunt of the battle through the year in the midst of depressing heathenism, and with little outside succor or inspiration. Pastors at home may have many books to read, the encouragement, sympathy, and comfort of intercourse with rich minds and richer hearts, and derive much of inspiration from other sources. All this is wanting for this body

A Fellow-Laborer.

of men to whom most of all credit must be given for whatever is accomplished in our station's life and activity. Representing as they do our ablest preachers and teachers and the humblest country evangelist and colporteur; laboring in places varying from the busy central station with its unending demands, to the lonely frontier outpost where they stand alone against a seething mass of heathenism; and ranging in age from the youth barely out of his teens to grey-haired veterans, remnants of the first line of converts, they deserve our heartiest confidence, sympathy, and praise.

A Class in the Married Women's School.

The Married Women's School.

That about which all else has centered in the women's work here in the city this year has been the new school for married women. Either history or myth has said that the Huns came down the side of the Alps upon their inverted shields. It must have been rather a strange sight to see an army arriving in that manner, but they got there and that was the main thing. To a New Yorker the means of locomotion used in this region would seem almost as strange. The ordinary Chinese cart in itself is a seven days' wonder, and one experiences anything from seasickness to paralysis when in one. But it is the most stylish way of travelling here in the interior; and in it the city women came with their bedding and other possessions. From the south came a woman and three children riding in a large open cart, such as are used to haul coal and other merchandise, the same being drawn by their own old steady ox. From a village up in the foothills came a woman on donkey back with her bedding underneath her and her other belongings packed around her, while dear little Mrs. Hu and her little baby, came from our Liu Lin Chen field over the mountains three days away.

But at last they were in and we said with Stevenson, "We beseech thee, Lord, to behold us with favor, folk of many families — gathered in the peace of this room." In the case of almost every one the coming had been with no little sacrifice on the part of some one, and it was our part to see that it had not been in vain. Our first idea

was to make it simply a Bible training school for raising up women to help in the out-stations, but it has turned out to be a full fledged school with reading and writing and arithmetic not taught to the tune which the old popular song versed it but to the tune often of fussing babies. For altogether there have been in this school twenty children under eight years of age, not a few of whom were under kindergarten age.

It has been really a goodly sight to see nearly a score of women on the recitation room k'ang, working away each at her own lesson unperturbed by the recitations of the others as she awaits her time of reading and explaining. The examination showed up only one of absolutely no ability. The little sixteen year old secondary wife of a banker here in the city has found what is much more to her liking than sitting on a k'ang at home with nothing to take up her time, and the seventeen year old wife of our gatekeeper, formerly so wild that she was the distress of all observers, has become one of the most stable and dependable as well as one of the most promising women in the school. Invariably when a story was finished in the Wednesday night story reading hour she would inquire the price of the book and produce the cash from some source to buy it. It was a joy to us all when she was recommended for baptism at the Easter meetings.

Industrial Work for Women.

The heavy load of poverty seems to fall most disastrously upon the women of China because of their bound feet

and their accompanying bound minds. The Shansi women are known as the most terribly bound in all China. You have heard that "China has abolished foot binding" but most of the women of this vast Province have never heard of that edict and should they hear it, would laugh it to scorn. The idea of giving up their pretty dainty little feet — the pride of their lives—is the last one that would come into their heads. It seems to us the poorer they are the tighter they want their feet. The economic results of this condition are evident—the women are untrained, disabled, and reduced to the minimum of efficiency. So hard is it for them to walk that only the work that can be done in a sitting position can be accomplished by them.

There are very few women in the interior of China who can make their own living and remain respectable members of society. Most women rather than be subjected to the trials of widowhood and earning their own living will marry into any home that offers itself no matter if they do thus become the slave of a hot-tempered and virulent mother-in-law. The large number of suicides among the women can be accounted for when one knows the tragic conditions under which the women of China have to live.

While the object of this industrial school is to give women a chance to earn a living and support their children, the primary motive as in all mission work, is to bring this needy class of women into such vital touch with the high ideals of Christ that they may be able to live clean wholesome lives. The work fits right in to all the activ-

ities of the station. The women bring their children with them, place them in school and support them there with the returns from their work done in the industrial department. One woman is coming next year to help in the family support while her husband studies in the Theological Training School.

The first to arrive was plump Mrs. Wei with her happy five, three ready for school and two babies to help her sew. Painstakingly and eagerly she makes her needle ply, happy in the thought that now her children can be in school. They are an attractive group as they are learning a little of what is possible even for Chinese village children to enjoy. But Mrs. Wei's family includes more than her five children. She was not satisfied not to share with other needy women so she looked up a friend in her village who is a widow and has shared her kang-bed with her, while she learns to do some work that she can soon do at home for a fairly good wage. One woman of culture and refinement came in to break off the opium habit and at the same time to learn some of this "foreign teaching." She and her husband had together used up the family wealth on opium and had become bankrupt. Now they are trying to cast about for a chance to begin over again. It is sad to see people of wealth and culture reduced to need because of the tenacious hold of the opium habit. Mrs. Lu is typical of just what we want the industrial work to do. She is the wife of one of our helpers who died last year and left her no means of support. He had been working for the church on a small salary and

had not been able to provide for the future. She would be destitute without this chance to help herself, but now she can make her living and send her little girl to school and her baby to kindergarten.

Christian Schools.

The educational department of missionary work in China was the last to assume importance and has been

Greeting the Missionary Visitor. An outstation school.

the slowest to develop. Since the recent awakening, however, it has become distinctly evident that this has now grown to be not only an essential, but the most important of all missionary agencies. The whole origin and cause of recent events as well as the whole history of

China goes to prove that the key to the position in China is the student classes. It is through these men that any solution of the problems raised by the contact of East and West (between which they are the buffer class) must be sought and found. Educational work is an absolute necessity for anything which intends to be represented in the China of the future.

In the year under review there are three outstanding events, significant for the possibilities which they open for the future.

The first event is the formation for the station of the Educational Board created by the Mission at the last annual meeting for the care of the elementary education. No step taken in the way of advance has meant more for future efficiency than when the delegates of the churches of the field met last January and selected their members to this Educational Board. It is composed of five Chinese and two foreigners and has taken over the entire care of the schools of the station. They have given themselves with enthusiasm to the task of reconstruction.

The second significant event of the year is the giving of government recognition to our schools, the final arrangements for which are just being completed. The time has never before seemed ripe to seek for this, but during the past year the situation has rapidly changed and as it chanced, the suggestion has come now not from the church in the first place, but from the authorities themselves. This raises our schools to the same level as the government schools, so that students from Christian

schools can compete on an equal footing with those of government schools in all fields of activity and for all places of preferment whatever.

The third event of moment the past year is the suggestion that the Church take over the management of the Government Middle School in Fenchow. Last summer, owing to the graft, and incompetency of the teachers the authorities were compelled to use, on the one hand, and the lack of funds on the other the school broke up at the close of the spring term. The suggestion then came for us to take over the school and conduct it in an honest way. The church has won some warm-hearted friends among the gentry and leading men of the district, and it was this which led to the opportunity. In this way the higher education of the students of the eight counties constituting this district falls into the hands of the Christian Church. Nor is this merely a matter of education alone, but of evangelization as well, for it opens up to and effectively reaches with the gospel the men who are to be the real leaders in all departments of the life of not merely the district covered by our own work, but of counties which lie far beyond our immediate care, in which these men may become centers of light.

"Received Virtue" Comes to the Girls' School.

Far up in the mountains to the northward "Received Virtue" worked during the vacation days out in the potato-patch which was to produce the money for her board and school books, helping her mother in the home to

make their coarse food, and ripping up the old winter clothes and quilts, and washing them in the village stream, all preparatory to leaving the aged father and mother during the winter days when she should be back in school.

At last the day arrives when the few coarse garments, the round comb, the small looking-glass and the bits of bright cord—her hair ribbon—are tied up in a big kerchief, that serves as our school girl's suit-case. No father or mother in a western land ever sacrificed more willingly to give their daughter a chance. When she had all unconsciously said farewell to her mountains, to the two roomed house, to the shabbily clad little mother and the neighbors gathered at her door she with her bundle and her father with her roll of bedding started down the mountain pass. The little mother watched the two figures out of sight, and then turned back to ponder over the difference between her own girlhood with its agonies of footbinding, and this wonderful life of her daughter. She could only feast over the word pictures "Received Virtue" drew for her during the vacation for she had never seen the city or had anyone point out to her the beauty of the mountains in which she lived. She knew that only with careful measuring of the flour could she and her husband pass over the winter days and not suffer from hunger. But even into this shadowed life crept a ray of hope now, for wasn't there the prospect that this child who had once seemed only a burden would one day become a teacher, and be almost as good to them as a son in their old age? The father and daughter exchanged burdens as they walked down the path, but the exchange of words was

few, for they were both pondering in their hearts the hopes of age and youth.

At last they entered the city gate, and followed the north wall to the city compound. Footsore and weary they entered and "Received Virtue" went straight to the foreign teacher's home to pay her respects and then ran light-hearted to join the other girls who had already returned to school.

This is the story of the coming of only one of our girls. Some came in cow-carts, some on donkey backs, and some as our Shangta girls — packed like sardines in a Peking cart, glad to be back and eager to tell of their home days, some timid, yet soon finding their place in the new girls' school.

In their Room.

Two members of the Girls' School, seated on the low tables which are their beds by night.

Our enrollment this year in the school proper has numbered over fifty. We have taken in all that we had equipment for, and more besides, just because we could not turn girls away in our present crisis. When one realizes that in our boys' schools alone we have enrolled over 800 boys, and in all departments of our girls' work

we have only about 120, we know that unless we make some stupendous sacrifice for our girls, we can't in the future have the Christian homes that are the rock foundations for the Christian Church.

The New Kindergarten.

The kindergarten was opened for the first time this last Fall in Fenchow, and has already convinced everyone of its place in the educational system. The little native teacher, Miss Keng, has taken up her work in a way which shows that she has found her place in life. In one of the early lessons in Sunday School last fall, there were pictures representing Christ. The keen childish eyes looked at them with interest and then said to her, "your face is more beautiful than God's." There was no irreverence in the remark, only the child had found a living, loving face, and because that life showed forth Christ's love, the reality to him surpassed a printed picture. This one illustration goes far in my mind to show the power that can be set in operation where we have trained our girls to do such work.

How I wish that I could give you the picture that is in my mind when I think of the little circle. At first the unkept little faces appeared hesitatingly at the door, to see what the school in which little children were said to play, was like. Soon the fear gave way to an interest which fascinated and held them, and before the morning session was over they had forgotten all fear and felt that they were in a place that welcomed them and was made for them as no other place had ever been.

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